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POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION SERVICE
AND THE IDP ADVISORY TEAM



Real time evaluation of UNHCR's IDP operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Evaluation summary

In January 2007 UNHCR issued a document entitled 'Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy: UNHCR's role in support of an enhanced humanitarian response to situations of internal displacement'. The primary purpose of this document was to set out the key considerations and principles guiding UNHCR's engagement with IDPs in the context of the UN's humanitarian reform process, and in particular, within the new institutional arrangements known as the 'cluster approach'. This evaluation report is one of a series which seeks to analyse UNHCR's initial experience in the implementation of the cluster approach as part of the humanitarian reform process, with the aim of identifying lessons learned and effective practices which may be drawn upon as the cluster approach is rolled out to other operations. The evaluation process also provided an early opportunity to review field operations in the light of the IDP policy framework referred to above, together with UNHCR's paper on 'The Protection of IDPs and the Role of UNHCR', issued in February 2007. The countries selected for evaluation were those in which the cluster approach was initially rolled out (Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, Somalia and Uganda), together with Chad, where a 'cluster-like' arrangement was already in place at the time the evaluation was undertaken.

This evaluation report is based on a mission to the DRC undertaken from 16 to 27 July 2007. The evaluation team consisted of three UNHCR staff members: Khassim Diagne (Senior Advisor IDP Operations), Claire Bourgeois (IDP Advisory Team) and Vicky Tennant (Senior Policy Officer, Policy Development and Evaluation Service). The team visited Kinshasa, Bukavu, Bunia and Goma, and met with staff from a number of UN agencies (including military and civilian staff of MONUC, the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo), local and international NGOs, government officials, and IDPs. Team members participated in a number of protection and early recovery cluster meetings at national and provincial level.

Workshops on the humanitarian reform process were conducted for UNHCR staff in Kinshasa, Bukavu and Bunia and the team also made a short presentation at the Humanitarian Advocacy Group meeting in Kinshasa on 27 July. Initial evaluation findings were presented to UNHCR staff in Kinshasa on 26 July and to UNHCR Headquarters staff on 30 July.

Key findings

- With the activation of the cluster approach at the beginning of 2006, UNHCR took on responsibility for co-chairing the Protection cluster (with MONUC) and the Early Recovery cluster (with UNDP). This enhanced engagement was in essence a logical expansion of UNHCR's role in the transition process, building on its existing responsibilities in relation to the protection of returning refugees and support for their reintegration.
- UNHCR staff have done a commendable job in delivering on the new responsibilities undertaken by the Office, in providing leadership and strategic direction to a diverse group of actors in a highly complex operational environment, and in developing UNHCR's own IDP programme.
- These efforts have nonetheless been undermined by structural flaws arising from UNHCR's budgetary and staff deployment procedures, which have inhibited UNHCR's effectiveness in the crucial early stages of cluster implementation.
- The Office's enhanced responsibilities for IDPs and for cluster leadership within the new humanitarian response framework were also insufficiently mainstreamed within the Office, resulting in a lack of *esprit de corps* and limited understanding and engagement by staff not directly assigned to IDP-related tasks.
- There is a need further to strengthen ongoing decentralization initiatives in order to enhance operational effectiveness in the east. This process is already under way with the recent delegation of some key programme responsibilities, but additional robust measures are needed.
- The shape and focus of the cluster approach in the DRC are still evolving. Nonetheless, there has been tangible progress in forging a common vision amongst humanitarian actors and in targeting resources more effectively on the basis of jointly identified needs.
- The situation in the east nonetheless remains characterized by uncertainty, with renewed conflict and large-scale displacement continuing to pose a real risk. A crucial test of the effectiveness of the cluster approach, and of UNHCR's role within it, is materializing in North Kivu, where the situation is becoming increasingly precarious.

Recommendations

Protection Cluster

- The national and provincial protection cluster terms of reference should be reviewed and updated to reflect the current context and priorities in each province, and to expand these beyond the initial focus on protection against violence.

- The cluster should review the range of protection monitoring activities currently ongoing and examine the potential for further harmonization, possibly through development of a common monitoring framework.
- The protection cluster should develop clear objectives and mechanisms to assess the impact of its activities.
- MONUC should be urged to standardize its engagement in the protection cluster, with one section acting as focal point for cluster lead responsibilities, and to enhance training of its staff in humanitarian protection.
- Further analysis is needed of the co-chairing arrangement, including clarification of roles and responsibilities as the 'first point of entry' and 'provider of last resort'.
- A protection cluster secretariat should be established, with responsibility for activities such as protection information analysis and reporting, monitoring progress in meeting cluster objectives, follow-up on recommendations and agreed actions, guidance and support to field-level clusters, and enhancing communication between provincial and national clusters.

UNHCR's IDP protection programme

- The Office should continue further to develop its strategic focus on land issues, reconciliation and co-existence, capitalizing on the link with refugee returns and expanding existing projects.
- The Office should actively seek out new partners with expertise on land, reconciliation and co-existence. In particular, the engagement of HABITAT, the Global Cluster focal point on land issues, should be encouraged.
- The Office should seek to develop projects addressing protection needs during displacement, and in particular, support to community-based protection mechanisms in IDP sites.

Early Recovery Cluster (Reintegration and Community Recovery)

- The work of the cluster should be more decisively linked with other transitional processes, including the Poverty Reduction and Strategy Paper (PRSP), the Programme d'Action Prioritaire (PAP), and the community recovery pillar of the Country Assistance Framework (CAF).
- The development of a draft national strategy on return, reintegration and community recovery is commended and should be supplemented with additional tools in order to make it operational.
- Links between the provincial and national clusters should be strengthened, and cluster priorities should be field-driven.

- Data collection and mapping mechanisms should be harmonized, building on the PEAR (Programme Elargi d'Appui au Retour) model, with a focus on identifying key locations and sectors for integrated area-based programming.
- The cluster should continue to encourage the active engagement of the government at both provincial and national levels.

UNHCR's IDP return and reintegration programme

- UNHCR should seek to assert a distinctive role within the IDP return process, based on its expertise in identifying and addressing protection-related obstacles to return and ensuring the protection of vulnerable groups/individuals.
- The Office should continue to pursue a strategy of community-based support in areas of actual or potential IDP/refugee return, and protection-focused reintegration programming.
- Efforts should be renewed to ensure a coherent framework for assistance to returning refugees and IDPs, and individual assistance packages should be harmonized to the maximum extent possible.
- The cluster should continue to promote a coherent community-based approach to the reintegration of returning IDPs and refugees and the reinsertion of demobilized ex-combatants.

Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)

- UNHCR, in consultation with UNICEF, OCHA and Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) partners, is encouraged to conduct an immediate and thorough assessment of current gaps relating to camp coordination and camp management (especially relating to site location and layout, protection and shelter) and make a formal recommendation to the Humanitarian Coordinator on whether or not the CCCM cluster should be activated. If not, an alternative means of responding to any gaps should be identified.
- Efforts should be made (either through a CCCM cluster or an alternative mechanism) to better understand and analyze the profile of the IDP population.

Emergency response

- Decisive action should be taken to enhance the capacity of the Office to engage meaningfully in contingency planning and to ensure a robust response to the unfolding crisis in North Kivu.
- UNHCR and the Protection cluster should take decisive action to quantify and mobilize the resources required to engage in an effective emergency response.

General coordination

- The communication flow and cross-fertilization of ideas between national and provincial clusters, and between provincial clusters, should be enhanced, possibly through the establishment of cluster secretariats.
- Cluster leads should take responsibility (with the support of OCHA) for ensuring incorporation of cross-cutting themes.

National capacity

- The Reintegration and Community Recovery cluster should maintain and further develop its efforts to engage national and provincial authorities directly in its activities.
- The Protection cluster should engage in high level discussions with the government on its responsibilities for IDP protection.
- The Protection cluster should continue to seek constructive ways of engaging provincial and district authorities on protection.
- Efforts should be made to build the capacity of national NGOs and other civil society actors on protection issues.

Security

- UNHCR's Field Safety Section should review the extent of security restrictions in eastern DRC and the mechanisms and criteria for decision-making, and should engage the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) in discussions on whether humanitarian operations could be better facilitated through a more proactive and differentiated approach to security management.

Management

- A senior-level IDP Task Force should be created, composed of the Representative, Deputy Representatives, Heads of Units and a Senior Field Coordinator, to steer the process of developing and implementing the IDP programme, and to ensure that it is firmly embedded in overall operational strategy.
- Recent steps to re-establish regular meetings of Heads of Sub-Office are welcomed. These should be held on a quarterly basis.

Staffing

- Additional staffing is required to enable the Office to discharge its functions under the cluster approach effectively, and to ensure that the substantial contributions of seconded staff are fully consolidated. An Organizational Development and Management Service (ODMS) mission should assist the office in identifying the appropriate locations and functions of these posts.

- Newly-created posts should be filled using accelerated procedures, and time limits rigorously adhered to.
- The Office should continue to pursue robust decentralization measures. The proposed establishment of a position of Senior Field Coordinator in the east is a welcome initiative.
- Staff appointed to posts with IDP-related responsibilities should undertake induction briefings at headquarters.
- Staff with cluster lead responsibilities should have appropriate experience and leadership skills, and should undertake appropriate training.

Funding

- UNHCR should seek to maintain its position on the Pooled Fund Board.
- UNHCR should play an active role as cluster lead in the identification of needs and priorities for pooled fund allocation, and should support cluster partners to develop strong project proposals.
- The Office should continue to pursue an active fundraising strategy at country level, with Heads of Sub-Offices taking an important role in attracting pooled funding at provincial level.

UNHCR Budget

- A decision on budget structure is urgently needed. The current practice of releasing funding for supplementary budgets on a six-monthly basis is seriously hampering operations and undermining the aim of enhanced partnership and predictability.
- Staff should liaise closely with partners, explaining constraints, managing expectations and minimizing delays.

General assessment and key features of the IDP operation in the DRC

1. The humanitarian situation in the DRC has improved significantly since the height of the armed conflict in late 2003, when more than three million people were estimated to have been internally displaced. The process of political reconstruction (incorporating the successful completion of presidential, national and provincial elections in 2006, improved relations with other regional powers, and the neutralization of key militia groups), has brought with it significant progress in the restoration of stability. Nonetheless, the humanitarian situation in the East remains characterized by uncertainty and regional disparities in the extent to which the transition process has taken root. Whilst it is estimated that the overall number of IDPs fell from 1.6 million to 1.1 million during 2006, large-scale return movements continue to take place in parallel with new waves of displacement shaped by the distinctive context in each of the Eastern provinces.

2. UNHCR has had a significant presence in the DRC for many years, based on its long-standing engagement with refugees from Angola, Burundi, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Sudan and more recently in the voluntary repatriation of Congolese refugees to the east of the country. The number of refugees in the DRC is currently estimated at 200,000, and the number of returnees at 109,000. Prior to the beginning of 2006, UNHCR's engagement with IDPs had been largely restricted to the inclusion of returning IDPs in community-based interventions in areas of refugee return. With the activation of the cluster approach in the DRC in early 2006, the Office took on enhanced responsibilities for protection and early recovery, with a particular focus on the humanitarian response in the east of the country.

3. The Office currently has 43 international and 154 national staff in the DRC. They are located in a Branch Office in Kinshasa and twelve sub- and field offices situated primarily in the east. Its operational budget for 2007 consists of three components: \$11.5 million annual budget for refugees (45 per cent funded by July 2007), \$26.5 million supplementary budget for voluntary repatriation and reintegration of Congolese refugees (56 per cent funded), and \$15.3 million supplementary budget for IDPs (70 per cent funded).

Current situation

4. The current situation in the East is characterized by disparate patterns of displacement and return, shaped by variable security conditions. The transition process and overall improvements in security have enabled almost two million IDPs to return home, but in many locations civilian populations continue to be exposed to a range of abuses including extortion, rape, hostage-taking, killings, looting of livestock, crops and food supplies, child recruitment and destruction of property. The perpetrators include both armed rebel groups (foreign and indigenous) and elements within the DRC integrated armed forces (FARDC), who exploit local communities as a source of material and financial support.

5. IDPs interviewed by the evaluation team also cited a number of protection challenges specifically linked to their displacement, including occupation of their land and property and in some cases, strained relations with over-burdened host communities, resulting in economic exploitation including non-payment of daily wages and rising debts owing to imposition of rents. In South Kivu, the evaluation team met villagers who had experienced repeated incidents of killing, looting, rape and hostage-killing, most recently in June 2007, and who have become 'déplacés pendulaires', spending the night in more secure locations and returning to work on their land during the day. Of particular concern is the situation in North Kivu, where the process of incorporating rebel factions into the FARDC has been particularly problematic and an estimated 163,000 people were newly displaced between January and July 2007. There are increasing concerns that the government may opt for a military solution to the crisis, and that events in North Kivu may also have a destabilizing effect on other provinces.¹

UNHCR's cluster responsibilities

Protection cluster leadership

6. The terms of reference of the protection cluster were solidly linked to the situation in the East, and in particular to the need to address abuses inflicted on civilian communities by armed actors. As a result, it was decided that the primary focus of the cluster would be the protection of civilians against violence, abuse and exploitation. In particular, the terms of reference for the cluster focus on collective rather than individual protection, and on the prevention and containment of violence. It was specified that material assistance to victims would be coordinated through other clusters/mechanisms, such as the rapid response mechanism for support to newly-displaced groups developed by UNICEF and OCHA. Thematic networks on child protection and gender-based violence were already in existence and to avoid duplication it was wisely decided to link these to the protection cluster through designation of focal points (UNICEF and UNFPA respectively). It was envisaged that protection responses in individual cases would be managed through these networks, or by the Human Rights section within MONUC.

7. It was also decided that the protection cluster would focus not only on the internally displaced, but also on 'other groups equally threatened by or subjected to violence'. This highlights the need to draw a distinction between UNHCR's direct operational responsibilities, which are focused on the protection of refugees and IDPs, and its broader role as protection cluster lead.² In the context of the eastern DRC, the cluster focus on protection of civilian populations was entirely appropriate. The majority of IDPs reside within host communities, whether on distinct sites or within the homes of other civilians. IDPs interviewed during the evaluation mission

¹ Further details are set out in the Annex. See also DR Congo: A Regional Analysis (Writtenet report, July 2007) and Congo: Consolidating the Peace (International Crisis Group, July 2007)

² This approach is in line with UNHCR's February 2007 paper: The Protection of Internally Displaced Persons and the Role of UNHCR. This states that the personal scope of UNHCR's activities is primarily directed at IDPs themselves, but that these will typically be pursued through a community-based approach which encompasses communities hosting IDPs or receiving them in areas of return. It highlights that UNHCR's coordination responsibilities as cluster lead also extend to 'affected communities', including those at risk of displacement.

reported that they had been displaced several times, generally for short periods and to locations not far from their home communities. This highlighted the fact that individuals living in the eastern DRC tend to shift from one category to the other, and that forced displacement is both a consequence and a cause of exposure to protection risks. A comprehensive approach to internal displacement must therefore seek to address protection threats which affect the broader civilian population, and not only those who are currently displaced. UNHCR has in any event always sought to adopt a community-based approach to protection and assistance.

8. UNHCR's experience in the DRC has also highlighted that while UNHCR's operational focus is on the protection of IDPs and refugees, its cluster leadership may require it to steer the humanitarian response on a broader range of protection issues. The evaluation team saw an example of this during a Protection Cluster meeting in Kinshasa, when discussions focused on the potential protection needs of Congolese migrant workers who were being summarily deported in large groups from Angola. While these individuals would not normally come within UNHCR's mandate or under its enhanced responsibilities for IDPs, UNHCR's role as cluster lead in such circumstances may require it to take the lead in assessing protection needs, and if required, engaging in advocacy as cluster lead and ensuring a response from cluster partners with the appropriate mandate and expertise.

9. The evaluation team found that the decision by the cluster to focus on protection against violence, abuse and exploitation was a solid strategic choice which sought to address a clear gap in the protection response. The co-leadership with MONUC (discussed further below) opened up a direct dialogue between humanitarian and peace-keeping actors which enabled protection risks and abuses identified through protection monitoring to be placed firmly on the agenda of international military actors, and through them, to influence military deployment to promote the security of civilian populations. There were a number of solid achievements in this respect. Some examples were the deployment of mobile operations bases (MOBs) in locations where abuses were reported or protection risks identified (this was seen as having been particularly successful in Katanga Province); the removal of certain FARDC commanders responsible for abuses against civilian populations (a recent example was in Djugu, Ituri District); the provision of escorts to ensure the security of IDPs voting in elections in Ituri district; and the negotiation of access to enable delivery of food assistance in zones where military operations were taking place. These have been accompanied by the provision of training on human rights and protection to the FARDC and local NGOs, and the protection cluster has also engaged in a number of important advocacy initiatives targeting national authorities at provincial and national level.

10. The decision that the protection cluster would be co-chaired by MONUC was also a logical strategic choice given the specific context and focus of the cluster, although this has brought with it a number of dilemmas. MONUC's engagement has facilitated a dialogue between humanitarian and military actors which has undoubtedly achieved tangible results in enhancing the physical protection of civilians. The evaluation team observed a particularly open dialogue between humanitarian and military actors in Bunia, where UNHCR, OCHA and other UN agencies participate in the daily MONUC Joint Operations Committee meeting. A directive issued by the Forces Commander in March 2007 underlined the importance of partnerships with human rights and humanitarian actors, and reiterated that

protection of civilians is a core component of MONUC's mandate. Nonetheless, the association of MONUC with the FARDC, which bears much of the responsibility for abuses against civilians, brings with it certain problems. Some participants, particularly NGOs, felt that MONUC's co-leadership of the cluster might compromise the cluster's ability to take an independent advocacy stance, in particular if the situation in North Kivu continues to deteriorate. In general, the experience in the DRC has highlighted the need for further analysis of the role of peace-keeping and integrated missions in the context of the cluster approach.

11. It is the assessment of the evaluation team that despite these dilemmas, the partnership with MONUC has brought concrete benefits and was a wise strategic choice in the DRC context. This does not mean that it should be automatically duplicated elsewhere. The evaluation team also noted that in some locations MONUC's focal point for cluster leadership resides within its Human Rights section, and in others within Civil Affairs. Whilst in general there have been constructive partnerships with both sections (both of which are key contributors to the work of the cluster), on occasion a lack of consistency in approach has proven problematic. MONUC should be encouraged to standardize its approach to co-leadership of the cluster and to ensure that staff assigned cluster lead responsibilities have a solid knowledge of humanitarian protection. There is also a need to clarify the respective roles of UNHCR and MONUC as co-leads, within the 'point of first call and provider of last resort' framework. This also applies more generally to all situations where cluster leadership responsibilities are shared.

12. It would be useful to bring together MONUC and UNHCR staff with cluster lead responsibilities at provincial and national level to reflect on experience so far and support the development of a common vision of the role of the joint cluster leads. It is also recommended that a formal process be established for delegation of cluster leadership (to an NGO or another UN agency) in locations where MONUC and/or UNHCR are not present. A clear framework for responsibility should be established, and agencies exercising delegated responsibilities should also participate in the meeting of cluster leads. The focal points for specific thematic areas might also be invited to participate. Regular meetings of this nature would also help to strengthen the links between the national and provincial clusters, and for provincial clusters to learn from each other's experiences.

13. It is recommended that a protection cluster secretariat be established within UNHCR which would take responsibility for activities such as servicing cluster meetings, ensuring that agreed follow up actions are carried out, analyzing and reporting on the results of protection monitoring, assessing and reporting on the impact of cluster activities, disseminating tools and guidelines, organizing training for cluster members, and acting as a focal point for communications between provincial and national clusters. UNHCR should considering assigning one P3 level staff member to lead these activities.

14. The focus on protection against violence, abuse and exploitation, and co-leadership of the cluster by MONUC, nonetheless run the risk that other aspects of humanitarian protection are not sufficiently prioritized. There is also the risk that key components led by focal points (child protection, GBV, human rights/impunity) are not sufficiently integrated into overall protection strategies. In this respect, a review of the minutes and strategy documents produced by the national and provincial

protection clusters suggests that the focus of the cluster is now broadening. This is to be welcomed, and provincial protection clusters should be encouraged to revise their terms of reference to reflect current priorities in their own locations, for example, on issues such as land and property, reconciliation, protection during displacement (including support to community-based protection mechanisms and relations with host communities), and protection of minorities. In this respect, the decentralized approach adopted by the protection cluster is commended and should be maintained, with the national cluster providing technical guidance and support to the field.

15. Valuable protection monitoring systems have been established by UNHCR and its implementing partners in Ituri, North Kivu, and Katanga, and an early warning system supported through the provision of mobile telephones to community focal points is currently being piloted in Ituri. Protection monitoring is an essential component of the work of the protection cluster, forming the basis of strategy development and responses by cluster partners, including referral and follow-up on individual protection cases. The evaluation team nonetheless noted that there is currently a range of protection-related monitoring mechanisms in place and felt that these could be better streamlined, ideally using a common framework. There is also a need for more systematic analysis of protection monitoring results, and the ongoing work by UNHCR/NRC to develop a database is welcomed. The protection cluster is encouraged to conduct a review of the systems for protection-related monitoring currently underway (these include protection and returnee monitoring conducted by UNHCR and its partners, population movement tracking led by OCHA, and human rights monitoring by MONUC) to examine whether these could be better harmonized in a way which meets the needs of all stakeholders whilst ensuring the protection of confidential data. A common monitoring framework would strengthen the evidence base for development of protection strategies, and enable better assessment of the impact of protection interventions.

16. The protection cluster has achieved a number of notable successes. UNHCR has taken a strong lead, particularly on monitoring and advocacy, and external partners interviewed by the evaluation team commended UNHCR staff for their significant contribution. The process of forging a common vision of protection priorities and translating this into concrete activities with real impact has nonetheless been extremely challenging, and the evaluation team found that UNHCR's leadership of the protection cluster has been significantly undermined by a number of factors related to staffing and management. These are further discussed below.

UNHCR's IDP protection programme

17. In tandem with its new responsibilities as protection cluster lead, and in coordination with cluster partners, the Office has also sought to expand its own programmes to address gaps in the protection of IDPs - both during displacement and in the course of the return and reintegration process. There have been some solid achievements in this respect, particularly on issues related to land rights and reconciliation. The Office should analyze and draw upon these experiences with a view to further development of similar projects in other locations.

18. A number of those interviewed highlighted the issue of land disputes as a key protection challenge, particularly in the context of the return of IDPs and refugees

and the demobilization and reinsertion of former militia. One observer in Ituri district noted that there was a rise in land disputes and intra-communal violence in the spring of 2007, at the same time as containment, disarmament and demobilization activities were gathering pace, and highlighted an example in which one hundred shelters had been burnt down as a result of a land dispute. The issue of land was also raised with the evaluation team by a village elder who reported that he had allocated land to a group of IDPs who wished to integrate within his community, but that this had been challenged by a third party who claimed to own the land and who obtained a ruling from the local administrative office that the IDPs should pay rent to him. The prevention and management of conflicts related to land ownership and tenure are crucial components of the stabilization process, and the protection of land and property rights is key to the sustainable return and reintegration of IDPs, refugees and former combatants.

19. In this respect, the Office has already embarked on important initiatives to address land and reconciliation issues at community level. In Ituri, the Office has supported an innovative sub-project implemented by an international NGO with specialist expertise on land issues (RCN Justice and Democracy). The project seeks to develop local capacity on land issues through legal awareness campaigns for IDPs and local communities, training for judges, local authorities and traditional leaders, radio programmes, and legal advice and support. By increasing awareness of the applicable legal standards, the project seeks both to ensure that legal rights are protected and to prevent conflict. Training on mediation and alternative dispute resolution is also provided. The project, which began in early 2007, has already had a significant impact, and was cited by IDPs with whom the evaluation team met as a concrete example of a positive contribution by UNHCR. In South Kivu and North Katanga, another innovative project (implemented by the NGO Search for Common Ground) aims to enhance community-based protection through awareness campaigns (radio broadcasts, mobile theatre performances and sporting and cultural activities) linked to themes such as mediation, combating stereotypes and discrimination, the peaceful resolution of disputes related to land and water access, gender-based violence and accusations of sorcery.

20. These are important examples of innovative protection programming which is squarely in line with UNHCR's mandate and expertise and has a visible impact. These projects are however limited in geographical coverage, and there is a need to build upon and draw lessons from these, expanding existing projects where possible and seeking additional partners. The Office should seek to enhance information exchange with other actors also engaged in community-based reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives, and to identify local NGOs with existing or potential capacity to engage in such programmes. The Office should also seek to identify opportunities to engage in co-existence programmes. Efforts should also be made to find additional partners who could provide further analysis and capacity-building on land issues, such as HABITAT.

21. The Office also has an important role to play in promoting the protection of IDPs during their displacement and analyzing and addressing protection-related obstacles to return. This includes analysing the protection profile of displaced communities, identifying and supporting community-based protection mechanisms, promoting good relations with surrounding and host communities, and providing direct support to potentially vulnerable individuals and groups. Efforts should also

be made to identify and promote self-reliance initiatives, and to link these with the work of the Early Recovery cluster.

Early Recovery Cluster (Reintegration and Community Recovery)

22. The Reintegration and Community Recovery Cluster is co-chaired by UNHCR and UNDP. This has been a welcome partnership which has produced a valuable cross-fertilization of ideas. Nonetheless, the cluster has struggled to define its role. This has evolved over time, and there is now a consensus that the cluster should function essentially as an advisory and technical support mechanism to facilitate coherent area-based cross-sectoral programming in locations to which refugees, IDPs and demobilized militia are returning. This formulation was formally set out in a letter to Heads of Agencies issued by the Humanitarian Coordinator on 25 June 2007 urging all cluster leads to nominate a focal point to participate in Reintegration and Community Recovery Cluster meetings. Sustained efforts are still needed to promote constructive partnerships with other clusters, and to demonstrate the added value that the involvement of the early recovery cluster can bring to their work.

23. The cluster has sought to engage in data gathering and analysis, prioritization of needs and identification of gaps, and to promote the incorporation of appropriate interventions into the work of other clusters and government strategies. Direct support to the return process is provided through the PEAR project developed by UNICEF and its partners in 2006. This encompasses a multisectoral assessment in areas of return, provides individual short-term assistance to returnees and addresses immediate gaps, such as water and sanitation, in areas of return. The PEAR was described by one interviewee as the 'operational arm' of the cluster. The cluster also envisages a role for itself in promoting self-reliance in areas of return through support to livelihoods (for example, income-generation and vocational training), which are not currently addressed through other clusters.

24. Provincial clusters have been established in North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema, Katanga and Ituri, and the evaluation team noted that substantial high-quality work is being done to map the current situation, needs and ongoing projects in areas of return. Substantial efforts have been made to associate the government with the work of the provincial level clusters. The efforts to link the return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs with the reinsertion of demobilized combatants, and to promote a coherent approach to these complementary processes, is also a welcome initiative. The national cluster was also active in promoting the inclusion of a community recovery perspective into the development of sectoral strategies in the 2007 Humanitarian Action Plan. The evaluation team welcomed the excellent work being done at field level to gather and analyze information on areas of refugee return, by partners such as ACTED. Efforts should now be made to standardize the current data collection and mapping mechanisms, and to use these to identify key locations and sectors where integrated area-based joint programmes could be developed.

25. At a national level, the cluster has supported the development of a draft national plan on return, reintegration and community recovery, which was developed with the support of a consultant through discussions at field and central level. This is a welcome initiative, and the efforts made to engage the government in this process at a working level are to be commended. The evaluation team nonetheless noted that whilst the consultant developing the plan had visited field

locations and discussed with cluster members, a more comprehensive consultation process was still required to ensure that the document reflected the needs and priorities at provincial level, and that all relevant stakeholders were sufficiently engaged. There would also be a need to develop further tools to ensure that it was effectively operationalized.

26. The cluster has encountered difficulties in linking its work to the transitional strategies being developed through the integrated office within MONUC and by the government – for example, the PRSP, the CAF, and the PAP. The cluster should engage more decisively with these processes, and should endeavour to associate its activities with, for example, the community recovery pillar of the CAF. It should also play a broader role in ensuring cohesion between humanitarian and transitional planning processes. There is also a need to strengthen the links between the national and provincial clusters, and to adopt a more field-driven approach.

UNHCR's IDP return and reintegration programme

27. The Office has an important potential role to play in the IDP return and reintegration process, given its extensive experience in and strong mandate for durable solutions programming. In a situation where both IDP and refugee returns are taking place, it is also important that these processes are facilitated within a coherent overall framework.

28. As noted above, initial assistance to returning IDPs is currently provided by UNICEF and its partners through the PEAR project. UNHCR's reintegration programme currently targets areas of return for both refugees and IDPs, using a community-based approach, and incorporating interventions such as rehabilitation of schools, health centres and water points, income generation for women and potentially vulnerable returnees, and support to HIV-related services. Other programmes include the protection-related interventions described above.

29. The steps taken by the Office to integrate its community-based programmes for the reintegration of IDP and refugee returnees (notably, in the September 2006-2007 Integrated Operational Strategy) are to be commended, and should be further strengthened. The evaluation team nonetheless took the view that the Office's potential role in the IDP return process could have been more decisively asserted, and that as a result some opportunities may not yet have been fully explored. In particular, efforts should be made as far as possible to harmonize the individual assistance packages being provided to returning IDPs and refugees. The team observed some efforts to explore this issue through the early recovery cluster, but it was unclear to what extent this was being actively pursued. Where necessary, the assistance provided through the PEAR could be supplemented, for example, by the provision of seeds and tools or other inputs to enhance self-reliance on return.

30. UNHCR should seek to assert its distinctive role in the IDP return process, particularly as regards the protection-related components of return. In particular, the Office should engage in the profiling of displaced communities and potential areas of return, in order to identify and address protection-related obstacles to return such as land issues, abuse of power by civilian or military authorities, or intra-community conflict. Such initiatives should be coordinated with partners engaged in the PEAR project and the protection cluster. The Office should also focus on ensuring that

potentially vulnerable individuals are identified and provided with support in the course of the return process and upon return.

Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)

31. Throughout the conflict in the eastern DRC, humanitarian actors have in general taken the position that the locations to which IDPs moved should not be designated as 'camps'. The majority of IDPs were displaced for short periods of time within host communities located close to their home areas, and not in separate sites. As a result, efforts were made to provide assistance and other services in such a way that communities as a whole could benefit and that IDPs would not be artificially segregated. This approach may also have been shaped by concerns that the establishment of camps could create a 'pull-factor' and could have a negative effect on self-reliance capacities.

32. For this reason, and also because it appeared that the overall trend was towards return, it was decided in early 2006 that the camp coordination and camp management cluster would not be activated in the DRC. Whilst this was a sensible strategic choice given the context at that time, the prevailing position that there were no IDP 'camps' in the DRC to some extent did not accord with the reality on the ground, and has led to some important concerns being left largely unaddressed. It is noteworthy, for example, that in certain locations, particularly in Ituri district, camps did exist and continue to do so (at Gety, for example), and that even where IDPs settle within 'host communities' they frequently reside in distinct sites within these communities. The overall context has also to some extent changed, with new displacement continuing to occur, particularly in the Kivus, and there is an increasing trend in North Kivu towards large-scale displacement to distinct locations, particularly in the area between Kiwanja and Nyamilima, just north of Goma. There is some evidence that the coping mechanisms of host communities are overstretched and proving inadequate to support the wave of new arrivals, and there is an increasing tendency for IDPs to gather in distinct sites. A July 2007 report from Refugees International characterized the lack of site management in this situation as a 'serious gap', a concern which echoed the findings of a mission by the OCHA Donor Support Group in May 2007. As the lead of the Global CCCM Cluster, UNHCR is under a duty to assess and advise on how such issues should be addressed.

33. A number of interviewees felt there was a gap in the humanitarian response during the period after the immediate provision of assistance through the OCHA/UNICEF Rapid Response Mechanism, which targets the first three months of displacement only. This is a particular concern given the apparent trend towards longer-term displacement in North Kivu. Shelter provision was identified as a key gap area during this interim period. Whilst plastic sheets are provided through the RRM, this is not sufficient to meet basic shelter standards over an extended period. Several protection gaps have also been identified, most notably in relation to the identification of vulnerable individuals and families in need of targeted assistance, provision of security, and relations with surrounding communities (a recent report by a UNHCR Field Officer on a new site in Rutshuru highlights the potential for conflict with the local community over the cutting of trees for shelters and firewood). It appears that more could also be done to profile the populations in these sites, and to enhance the quality of data collection on population movements.

34. Owing to security restrictions and the limited duration of the mission, the evaluation team did not have the opportunity to visit the recently-established sites north of Goma, nor to conduct an exhaustive assessment of whether a CCCM cluster should be activated. From the discussions conducted, it nonetheless appears that in certain locations there is a need to bring greater coherence to the organization of IDP sites, and to provide greater support to IDP communities, particularly with regard to shelter, protection, community organization and profiling for eventual solutions. The Office is encouraged, with the support of the Global CCCM Cluster, and in coordination with OCHA, UNICEF and RRM/PEAR partners, and the Comités Provinciaux Inter-Agences (CPIA), to conduct an immediate and exhaustive assessment of:

- The gaps relating to camp coordination and camp management (especially relating to site location and layout, protection and shelter);
- Whether these gaps can be addressed through existing coordination mechanisms, or whether a separate CCCM Cluster is needed; and,
- If so, the locations in which it should be established.

35. It is suggested that this analysis should be carried out as a matter of priority in North Kivu, but that it should also be extended to other locations where IDPs are living in distinct sites, such as Ituri district. Based on this analysis, and the recommendations formulated, the matter should be brought to the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Humanitarian Advocacy Group (HAG) for a decision. In the event that a recommendation is made for activation of the cluster, or enhanced CCCM activities, UNHCR must assess what resources (human and financial) would be required to enable it to take on this responsibility and devise a strategy to ensure that these are mobilized, and/or must ensure that appropriate partners are identified and engaged.

Emergency response

36. At the time when the cluster approach was activated, it was anticipated that the overall trend in the East would continue to be towards the return of IDPs and incremental stabilization. As was highlighted in the opening part of this document, the current situation is rather more complex, and the situation is particularly fragile in North Kivu. The evaluation team participated in a meeting of the HAG in Kinshasa at which the humanitarian contingency plan for North Kivu was discussed. There is now considerable concern in many quarters that the government may opt for a military response to the refusal of Nkunda loyalists to proceed to brassage, and the consolidation of his authority through parallel power structures. The Protection Cluster has developed a strong position paper and advocacy strategy advocating a non-violent solution to the crisis, and other commentators such as the International Crisis Group have expressed concern about the emerging potential for renewed conflict in the Kivus. Some 163,000 people are estimated to have been displaced already this year as a result of the deteriorating situation, and a contingency plan for the displacement of a further 375,000 has been recently updated.

37. It is clear that this is a crucial test of the effectiveness of the cluster approach in enhancing the accountability and predictability of the humanitarian response. There

is a real risk of loss of credibility if the UNHCR and the clusters it leads are not equipped to respond. The evaluation team was concerned to note the low level of international staffing in the Goma Sub-Office, particularly given its concurrent responsibilities for voluntary repatriation of refugees. This is discussed further in the section on staffing below. The Office is encouraged to enhance its engagement in the contingency planning process, to identify and quantify needs and to ensure that resources are mobilized. Currently, the Goma Office does not have the capacity to respond adequately to the emerging crisis.

General coordination

38. In general, humanitarian coordination appears to be functioning well in the DRC. The Humanitarian Coordinator (who is also the Resident Coordinator, Deputy SRSG, Deputy Designated Official and UNDP Resident Representative) is located within the integrated office of MONUC, and is supported by the OCHA office. At Kinshasa level, overall humanitarian coordination takes place through the HAG which meets weekly, and an inter-cluster coordination group recently established to facilitate coordination between clusters at the working level. At provincial level, this function is filled by the CPIAs.

39. In general, those participating in provincial clusters felt that the flow of communication with the national clusters (and between provinces) could be enhanced. Many of those interviewed stressed the substantial demands on their time being made by participation in cluster meetings. Staff exercising cluster lead responsibilities would benefit from guidance on managing meetings effectively and facilitating cluster activities using alternative methods wherever possible.

40. It was noted that the incorporation of cross-cutting issues (such as the environment, HIV and gender) into the work of the clusters has been weak, and cluster leads are encouraged to take a more decisive role in this respect, with appropriate guidance from OCHA.

National capacity

41. Until very recently, humanitarian activities in the eastern DRC had operated with limited involvement of the government. That situation is changing. Following the adoption of a new constitution by referendum, and national and provincial elections in 2006, the national authorities now have a renewed legitimacy and humanitarian actors must now work towards enhanced engagement with national and provincial authorities. Local elections due to take place by 2008, and the anticipated decentralization of control of revenues, will also require a more substantial engagement with authorities at field level.

42. Involvement of the authorities in the cluster approach has, to date, been limited although the efforts of the Reintegration and Community Recovery Cluster in this respect are to be commended. Within the Protection Cluster, in order to maintain an independent advocacy stance and given the sensitive nature of the protection issues being discussed, it was decided that the authorities should not be directly engaged in the cluster for the time being. The provincial clusters have nonetheless developed mechanisms for interacting with key institutions – most recently, in North Kivu,

where a small group representing the cluster has started to meet with the provincial authorities on a regular basis.

43. The decision not to include government representatives directly in cluster meetings was found to be appropriate by the evaluation team, and has enabled an open dialogue and sharing of information which would otherwise have been difficult to achieve. Nonetheless, this decision should be kept under review, and the cluster should continue to focus on the strengthening of national protection capacity (one of the three priorities identified in the HAP) as a key component of its work. In this respect, efforts to engage with civilian and military authorities should be further enhanced, and capacity-building on the rule of law should be prioritized. The Protection Cluster is also encouraged to enhance its engagement with civil society interlocutors and local NGOs, who are already playing an important role which could be further enhanced through the provision of training and material support. There is a general need to focus more strategically on building the capacity of national NGOs in all sectors, in order to equip them to access pooled funding and to participate as equal partners in the cluster approach.

44. The Office should seek to engage in high level discussions with the government on its IDP responsibilities. The Regional Protocol on IDPs developed in conjunction with the Great Lakes Pact provides an important advocacy tool in this respect. There is currently no official government policy on IDPs, and as yet no government focal point on IDPs has been established. The National Refugee Commission (CNR) has been identified as a possible candidate for this responsibility, however this should be further analyzed and care should be taken to ensure that this does not result in a diminution of its capacity on refugee matters. Consideration should also be given to alternative mechanisms to mainstream IDP issues within existing national structures, such as the formation of an inter-ministerial policy committee and/or task force.

Integrated mission

45. International engagement in the DRC is shaped by the presence of MONUC, which incorporates military, political and civilian components within an integrated mission. Humanitarian components are only partially incorporated within the integrated mission, with OCHA and humanitarian actors remaining outside the mission structure, although reporting to the Humanitarian Coordinator located in the integrated office. The limited incorporation of humanitarian components into the mission has both positive and negative implications. On the one hand, it is arguable that the distinct and independent nature of humanitarian action is better maintained through separate structures, however, it also results in humanitarian interventions being accorded less priority within the mission framework than might otherwise be the case, and logistical support to humanitarian activities is subject to limitations.

46. In general, interaction between humanitarian actors and the military component of MONUC is facilitated through the MONUC Civil Affairs Section, and the evaluation team saw some examples of positive and constructive interaction at both provincial and national level. There are interesting examples of direct engagement of UN agencies in Joint Operations Committee and other MONUC military planning meetings, for example in South Kivu and Ituri.

Security

47. Humanitarian operations in the east are significantly restricted by the fragile security situation. The majority of the eastern zone is in Security Phase 4, and travel to the field by UN staff (including to IDP settlements) requires substantial advance planning to obtain security clearance and arrange MONUC military escorts. This results in significantly reduced levels of accountability as UN agencies are unable effectively to monitor projects being implemented on their behalf, and inhibits the understanding by staff of the environment in which they are operating.

48. The security management system is administered by UNDSS but in practice is based on assessments made by MONUC military personnel. This has led to concerns by some that insufficient weight is being given in the security management process to the imperative of enabling a humanitarian response, and that a more proactive and differentiated approach to risk assessment and mitigation could be adopted, taking better account of the specificities of each location. The evaluation team noted that international NGOs move much more extensively in the field than UN agencies. Whilst there are some reasons why this is so, this nonetheless points to a need to re-assess the extent of the restrictions on movements of UN staff, and to examine ways of mitigating and managing risk to enable more effective operational engagement. UNHCR's Field Safety Section should take this up directly with UNDSS.

Management

49. UNHCR's IDP activities in the DRC have still not been fully mainstreamed within the operation. The operation in the DRC is a particularly complex one, incorporating a significant refugee caseload involving multiple nationalities in a range of locations, a voluntary repatriation and reintegration programme involving several countries of asylum, and most recently, a new and challenging IDP programme in the context of the cluster approach. Given these competing demands, and the limited additional resources available, it is perhaps not surprising that UNHCR's IDP and cluster-related responsibilities were undertaken largely by certain individuals within the Branch Office and field offices, and that staff not directly assigned IDP-related tasks remained largely disengaged from the process. In addition, delays in creating and filling posts and the reliance on non-UNHCR secondees (discussed below) contributed to a situation where IDP responsibilities were not fully mainstreamed into the work of the office, resulting in a lack of corporate ownership (or *esprit de corps*). This has regrettably manifested itself in a lack of cohesiveness and consistency of approach, which has complicated relations between the Branch Office and the field, and with implementing partners.

50. To address this situation, it is recommended that an IDP Task Force be established, led by the Representative and incorporating the Deputy Representatives, Heads of Units in the Branch Office and a Senior Field Coordinator located in the East, to steer the process of developing and implementing UNHCR's IDP programme, and to ensure that it is firmly embedded in the overall operational strategy. This should be a temporary arrangement until such time as the programme is sufficiently mainstreamed. The Task Force should ensure that the Office speaks with one voice on IDP issues, and that all staff members are encouraged to feel a sense of ownership of the IDP programme, even if they are not directly engaged in IDP-related activities. The recent initiative to convene a quarterly meeting of Heads

of Sub-Offices is to be welcomed as a means of further enhancing the cohesiveness of field operations.

Staffing

51. Current staffing levels are inadequate to enable a serious engagement in UNHCR's new operational responsibilities. While support from schemes such as PROCAP (Protection Capacity) and SURGE has been very valuable, there has been an over-reliance on such short-term deployments, and high staff turnover has led to insufficient institutionalization of the IDP operation.

52. In Goma, for example, there are currently only two regular international posts. One of these was filled only in July 2007, so that for a period of around one month the Head of Office was the only international staff member present. The Global Protection and CCCM Clusters have provided support through deployment of a Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) secondee and a field officer on mission, but there is a need for more decisive reinforcement of the capacity of the office if a robust response to the emerging crisis in North Kivu is to be delivered.

53. UNHCR's performance as cluster lead has been hampered by delays in creating and filling posts with sufficiently experienced staff of the appropriate profile. Even where posts were created, the necessity to wait for funding before activating posts and the slow recruitment cycle resulted in significant delays in filling these and deploying staff. In these circumstances, the Office has had to resort to interim measures such as – in one location - relying on a UNV to lead a provincial cluster. Whilst such staff have done a commendable job, the ability to draw on a reserve of experience is a crucial element of effective leadership. As such, it is essential that UNHCR improves its capacity to deploy suitably qualified and experienced staff members with strong leadership and interpersonal skills to posts with cluster lead responsibilities. The team nonetheless noted that efforts have been made to ensure that staff recently appointed to heads of office posts have appropriate skills and experience to provide effective protection cluster leadership, and this is commended. More flexibility is needed to enable external recruitment through temporary assistance arrangements where appropriate.

54. There is also a need to increase the overall number of staff exercising IDP-related functions, particularly (although not exclusively) in the field. The proposal to decentralize some critical functions to the field, and to appoint a P5 level Senior Field Coordinator, is welcomed. Decentralization will become increasingly important as the role of the provincial administrations increases under new constitutional arrangements which will allocate them control over 40 per cent of tax revenues collected locally. The forthcoming ODMS mission is to be welcomed. Additional posts created should be advertised under accelerated procedures, and time limits rigorously adhered to. There should be a focus on identifying staff with the appropriate profile, and this may require a review of job descriptions and associated competencies. At operational level, staff should have a multi-functional profile, although it may be appropriate to identify certain posts which will be allocated only IDP-related responsibilities. At management level, staff should exercise multi-functional responsibilities, to ensure effective mainstreaming. International staff appointed to posts with IDP responsibilities should undertake a series of induction briefings at Headquarters, and those exercising cluster-related responsibilities should

be required to undertake appropriate training, such as the course organized by OCHA in which two Bukavu-based staff members recently participated.

55. The Office is also encouraged to explore the possibility of strengthening the profile of national staff within the IDP operation, and to consider increasing the number of national officer posts. The evaluation team noted that in certain locations, the hiring of UN staff from outside the region may attract resentment. This was mentioned as a possible cause of security problems in one province, and should be taken into account in the recruitment process for national staff. The Office is also encouraged to review options for the recruitment of interpreters, to enable better communication between international staff and beneficiaries without inhibiting the work of national protection and field staff.

56. In general, there are lessons to be drawn for future operations in which new cluster responsibilities are being undertaken. The start-up phase of the cluster approach will frequently require a degree of 'front-loading' of resources, through the swift deployment of additional staff with the right profiles, to enable strong and decisive leadership and strategy development. This is particularly the case in locations where the Office has not previously undertaken substantial responsibilities for IDPs, and where UNHCR's own IDP programme has to be developed, with the associated needs assessments, engagement of new partners and project design that this entails. In such situations, the Office cannot do 'more with less'.

Funding

57. The cluster approach was activated in the DRC in tandem with the establishment of a pooled funding mechanism, in which the clusters play a key role. For 2007, a total of \$94.8 million had been received by the Pooled Fund by the end of June. Some 72 projects totalling \$63.5 million were financed in the course of the first allocation, and the second allocation of \$35 million (of which \$15 million is for the East) has recently been announced. A further \$35 million was released through the the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in the first half of 2007, and additional CERF funding is also likely to be made available.

58. The mechanism for allocation of pooled funding has evolved over time. The process is strongly field-driven, with the majority of funding allocated to projects developed at provincial level, and this is to be commended. Initial identification of priority needs, adoption of a regional strategy, selection and prioritization of projects takes place through the provincial clusters and the CPIA, based on an overall envelope assigned to each province and on criteria set out in guidelines issued by the Humanitarian Coordinator. A technical review of the projects is carried out by the national cluster leads and a technical committee, prior to final approval by the Pooled Fund Board. The latter comprises UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Sweden, the Netherlands, and DFID, and is supported by an OCHA secretariat. The involvement of the clusters in identification of needs and project development has facilitated greater cohesion, and whilst there was an initial sense that NGOs saw the clusters primarily as the means to access pooled funding, this appears to be changing. In interviews with NGOs, some concerns were nonetheless expressed about the potential conflict of interest when cluster leads and members of the pooled fund board are also submitting projects for funding. There was some criticism of what one interviewee described as the formation of 'clans' to provide mutual support for

funding proposals. There is also still a perception by some that the process is too UN-driven. Of the first allocation in 2007, 30 per cent went to NGOs and 70 per cent to UN agencies. It should nonetheless be noted that the majority of UN projects are implemented in partnership with NGOs. CERF funding is currently allocated to UN agencies only, and allocation takes place at a national level.

59. UNHCR's position on the Pooled Fund Board places it in an important position of responsibility. Partners interviewed by the evaluation team commended the professional and accommodating approach which UNHCR had adopted in this respect. The Office should maintain its active participation in the Pooled Fund Board, and should ensure that its position on the Board is retained.

60. The Office has developed a strategy for accessing pooled and CERF funding, and this was recently updated to target the second Pooled Fund allocation. In 2006, this resulted in UNHCR received 7.2 per cent of the available CERF and pooled funding. The Office was successful in attracting some 20 per cent of the initial allocation of CERF funding released in early 2007 (\$7.2 million of \$35 million) but less successful in attracting pooled funding (\$1.3 million of a \$61.5 million envelope). This highlights the need for Heads of Sub-Offices (with the support of the Branch Office) to engage in proactive strategies to promote the approval of projects at provincial level, where decisions on pooled funding are essentially made. This is becoming particularly important as donors are increasingly channelling funding through the pooled fund arrangement, with some now relying exclusively on this mechanism. The evaluation team was told that approximately 35 per cent of humanitarian projects currently ongoing in Ituri district are funded through the CERF and pooled fund. With this in mind, it is important that staff selected for head of office posts should have strong skills in external relations and fundraising, and that this is included in the process of objective-setting. Further analysis of the operation of the pooled fund arrangements, and UNHCR's experience with these, would be beneficial.

UNHCR budget

61. The evaluation team found that current budgeting practice is significantly undermining the Office's efforts under the cluster approach to achieve predictability and enhanced partnership. The current practice of releasing funding under supplementary budgets only six months at a time is seriously hampering operations and inhibits the development of coherent and predictable programmes. Implementing partners interviewed by the team highlighted the great difficulties they had in achieving substantial outputs in just six months, particularly when the time needed for recruitment and training of staff is taken into account. Uncertainty over funding and associated job insecurity has negatively affected staff morale and in some cases has led the staff of implementing partners to seek alternative employment.

62. The evaluation team found that the six month planning cycle is a serious impediment to the successful development of the IDP programme. It has a negative effect on relations with partners, and acts as a disincentive to others who might otherwise consider becoming partners, but who can find more stable funding arrangements elsewhere. It also seriously limits the potential for entering into partnership with national NGOs, who do not have access to pre-financing

mechanisms. The evaluation team nonetheless noted that the situation could be improved through enhanced communication both within the operation and with external partners, and it is recommended that staff liaise closely with partners, taking time to address their concerns, explain constraints and manage expectations, and ensuring that delays are minimized wherever possible.

63. The DRC experience demonstrates that a decision on the budget structure is urgently needed, as current practice is significantly hampering operations.

Conclusion

64. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is at a crossroads. While the security situation has largely improved since the civil war of 2003 with additional significant socio-political gains registered in the last eighteen months, the life of thousands of uprooted communities remains precarious and still requires focused and renewed assistance by the international community.

65. The introduction of the cluster approach has enabled the humanitarian organisations to better coordinate their interventions benefiting IDP and other affected civilian populations. However, these interventions are only tiny pieces of the larger peace, security and stability puzzle.

Annex

Current situation in the Eastern Provinces

North Kivu

In North Kivu, joint military operations conducted by MONUC and the DRC's armed forces (FARDC) to neutralize renegade groups led to significant new displacement in 2006, in particular as a result of confrontations with the militia group led by General Nkunda. An agreement to incorporate Nkunda's rebel factions into the FARDC ('mixage') initially resulted in improved security for the civilian population. However, key elements of the integration process applied to other rebel groups were not incorporated in the agreement. In particular, the mixed units were not redeployed elsewhere (a process known as 'brassage'), and a dual command structure was established which enabled Nkunda effectively to build up a parallel administration. Mixed brigades under his control embarked on a series of attacks against FDLR militia in the spring of 2007, resulting in large-scale new displacement and reprisals against civilian populations by rebel groups. Most recently, it appears that Nkunda's mixed brigades have started to wear Rwandan uniforms, and reports of recruitment by Nkunda of Congolese Banyamulenge in refugee camps have also contributed to increasing anti-Tutsi sentiment. An estimated 163,000 people were newly displaced between January and July, bringing the total number of IDPs in the province to 650,000.

With the government now reportedly preparing a new offensive against Nkunda, humanitarian agencies have embarked on contingency planning to respond to the unfolding crisis. North Kivu is the only province which has seen an increase in the number of IDPs in the last two years, with the overall total estimated at 650,000 in July 2007 as compared with 503,000 in October 2005. Humanitarian workers report that in contrast with previous patterns, which saw civilians periodically displaced for periods of three to six months at a time, there is an increased trend towards longer-term displacement. At the same time, a new trend is emerging as increasing numbers of IDPs collect in camp-like settlements rather than scattered among host communities, who appear unable to absorb the most recent newcomers.

South Kivu

In South Kivu, MONUC/FARDC military operations against the FDLR and Mayi Mayi also led to new displacement in 2006. Attacks on local populations by FDLR and Rasta rebel groups continue to result in new displacement in 2007. The evaluation team met villagers in the Kabare area who described repeated incidents of killing, looting, rape and hostage-taking, most recently in mid-June 2007. These villagers, like many others in South Kivu, have become known as 'déplacés pendulaires', moving to larger settlements with higher levels of security at night and returning each day to their own villages to engage in agricultural production. A Banyamulenge insurgency which began in the Haut and Moyen Plateau in July 2007

was reportedly put down; however anti-Tutsi/ Banyamulenge rhetoric appears to be on the increase. It is estimated that the number of IDPs in South Kivu rose from 195,000 to 202,000 between January and March 2007, albeit that this number is still significantly lower than the figure of 351,000 recorded in late 2005.

Katanga

In Katanga Province, the most recent trend has been towards return. The deployment of MONUC in early 2006 played a significant role in the surrender of a key Mayi Mayi leader and the demobilization of the majority of the militia under his control. As a result, the number of IDPs dropped from around 400,000 in April 2006 to just 28,000 by March 2007. Nonetheless, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programme has been hampered by shortage of funds and there have been repeated violent protests by demobilized Mayi-Mayi groups who remain dissatisfied with the process. Traditional leaders in Moba also led anti-Tutsi protests at the end of July 2007, and there are fears that the situation in the Kivus could also spill over into Katanga.

Ituri (Province Orientale)

The overall security situation in Ituri district (Province Orientale) has improved over the last two years owing to a robust strategy by MONUC and the FARDC to contain and neutralize renegade militia, leading to the disarmament of 16,000 combatants. One former militia leader, Thomas Lubanga, was arrested and transferred to the International Criminal Court. The number of IDPs dropped from approximately 280,000 in October 2005 to 208,000 in March 2007. Nonetheless, 2006 saw a continuing pattern of short-term, large-scale displacement, particularly as a result of human rights abuses by militia groups and the FARDC in the course of joint MONUC/FARDC operations. During 2007, the ongoing presence of militia, foreign armed groups and undisciplined soldiers has continued to result in grave abuses against the civilian population. During the visit of the evaluation team to Bunia, the third phase of the DDR process was initiated. Whilst this represents a crucial step in the stabilization process, there are fears that dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the Nkunda situation may also undermine the *brassage* and DDR processes in Ituri.